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RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 2209  
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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Mideast

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Key stories in the media:  
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Israel Radio reported that PM Benjamin Netanyahu will meet today with the leaders of the Yesha Council of Settlements in the Territories and the heads of local councils in the West Bank to discuss the 10-month moratorium on construction in the territories. The radio reported that few settler leaders attended a similar

meeting with DM Ehud Barak, following a day of clashes throughout the West Bank between settlers and the inspectors enforcing the freeze. Leading media reported that Barak sought to placate the settlers, promising to restore mayors' power to approve minor renovation projects such as enclosing balconies or building pergolas over a porch -- powers they had initially lost under last week's cabinet decision on a settlement freeze. Barak was quoted as saying at the meeting: "Settlement blocs will be an integral part of Israel in any future negotiations with the Palestinians. The Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea are regions that are dear to my heart.Q Leading media cited sharp criticism of the freeze by Likud cabinet minister Moshe QBugiQ YaQalon, who is quoted as saying that Qthis was not what was decided by the cabinet.

Maariv reported that the IDF is interrupting its exercises to brace for possible enforcement of the freeze.

Major media reported that Israel is waiting for Hamas' answer to the German mediator's proposal on the final prisoner exchange deal over kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit. The Islamist group is expected to respond within the next few days. The mediator met separately over the past few days with representatives of both sides. Arab media reports say Hamas is likely to present additional conditions for the agreement, which Israel has already agreed to in principle. The main remaining dispute, say the reports, is over a few senior prisoners who are described as "symbols of the Palestinian struggle." HaQaretz reported that it seems that Hamas has concluded it will be difficult to convince Israel to free the senior Hamas leaders. Therefore, Hamas will likely focus its demands on two prisoners not from Hamas: Marwan Barghouti of Fatah, and the Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmad SaQadat. The final negotiations center on which senior prisoners Israel will release. The Jerusalem Post quoted BarghoutiQs wife Fatwa saying that he Qis going nowhere; he wants to return to his home and family in Palestine.Q The newspaper cited similar comments by BarghoutiQs friends.

The Jerusalem Post reported that French Ambassador to Israel Christophe Bigot told the newspaper yesterday that France has "several strong reservations" about a draft resolution on the Middle East put forward by Sweden that would recognize east Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state. "Let us be clear the text is not an E.U. text; it is a Swedish proposal looking for agreement by the 27 E.U. members of the Council of Foreign Affairs next Tuesday," Bigot said of the document, which has raised Jerusalem's ire for a number of reasons, primarily because of its pre-judging negotiations on Jerusalem and its reference in the document to "Palestine." The E.U.'s ambassadors in Brussels are scheduled to meet today, along with E.U. security experts, to further discuss the text. The Jerusalem Post reported that Israel, as part of its diplomatic efforts to block acceptance of the document, is in contact with the U.S., hoping that it will explain to key E.U. states that the text would only make moving the diplomatic process forward even more difficult than it already is.

HaQaretz reported that the IDF recently finished formulating its operational doctrine on how to deal with the threat of rockets and missiles aimed at Israel's home front and how to provide protection against these threats. In a report last year, the State Comptroller had criticized the lack of an operational plan.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Jews worldwide were up in arms on Monday over the Jewish National FundQs donation of trees to a housing project being administered by the P.A. in the planned West Bank community of Rawabi.

HaQaretz reported that PM Netanyahu is considering rescinding the appointment of Shai Bazak as Consul General in New York. The daily reported that the move -- and the possible repealing of Alon Pinkas apparent appointment as ambassador to the U.N. -- is likely to cause a rift between Netanyahu and FM Avigdor Lieberman, since the rescinding of even one appointment signals that the PM is overruling his foreign minister.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Alberto Nisman, the Argentinean prosecutor who ferreted out Iranian Links to ArgentinaQs largest terror attack, warned of TehranQs terror network in Latin America. In an unrelated development, based mostly on Al Jazeera-TV

reports, Israeli electronic media reported that this morning a bomb targeted at a bus carrying Iranian pilgrims near a major Shi'ite religious shrine in Damascus causing dozens of casualties. The bomb attack took place as Saeed Jalilee, a top Iranian security official, was visiting Damascus for meetings with Syrian officials.

Ha'aretz and other media reported that on Tuesday some 100 people injured and family members of those killed in the 2004 Taba Hilton suicide bombing filed a suit against the hotel chain in the Jerusalem District Court, arguing that the owners did not take minimum security precautions that could have prevented the attack. The plaintiffs are seeking about \$70 million in compensation for medical expenses, pain, emotional trauma, and lost earnings. The attack killed 33 people, including 13 Israelis.

Maariv reported that Orna Angel, a former senior female advisor to DM Barak, might become director-general of the Defense Ministry.

Yediot reported on the role of Israeli-made unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in the fighting in Afghanistan. The Jerusalem Post quoted an Israeli defense official as saying, regarding exports of Israeli defense technology: "The expansion of the war in Afghanistan opens a door for us." A Maariv article on the NATO states "fear of an entanglement in Afghanistan is headlined: 'Power in the Mud'.

Ha'aretz reported that stories appearing on several Ukrainian Web sites claim that Israel has brought some 25,000 Ukrainian children into the country over the past two years in order to harvest their organs. The claim, which was made by a Ukrainian philosophy professor and author at a pseudo-academic conference in Kiev five days ago, is the latest expression of a wave of anti-Semitism in the country.

Yediot reported that Netanyahu is expected to head the Israeli delegation to the upcoming Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.

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Mideast:  
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Block Quotes:  
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## I. Lawbreakers

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (12/3): "The settler leaders' lawless behavior after the decision to temporarily and partially freeze settlement construction in the West Bank reminds us of Defense Minister Ehud Barak's metaphor of a 'villa in the jungle' to describe Israel's place in the region. Only a few kilometers from Tel Aviv, the laws of democracy give way to the law of the jungle. Once again it turns out that only an ultra-thin layer separates the rebels and tree cutters in the illegal outposts from the core of the settler establishment.... A government that demands that the Palestinian Authority ensure law and order among the Palestinians in the West Bank is not allowed to be sympathetic to the organized lawlessness of the Jewish residents there."

## II. Disengagement II

Senior commentator Ari Shavit wrote in Ha'aretz (12/3): "Benjamin Netanyahu made history twice. The first time was when he adopted the two-state solution in his Bar-Ilan speech and the second was when he decided last week to freeze settlement construction. The Palestinians dismiss his steps and the Europeans say they're not enough. The skeptics are skeptical and the cynics are cynical. But the truth is that Netanyahu circa 2009 is situating himself to the left of Yitzhak Rabin circa 1995. Unlike Rabin, Netanyahu now accepts the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state. Unlike Rabin, he is issuing orders prohibiting construction throughout the Jewish West Bank. Netanyahu has crossed the Rubicon - on both ideological and practical levels - and reinvented himself as a centrist.... Disengagement II will have to be completely different from its predecessor. It will have to be coordinated with the Palestinian Authority and granted European support and it will have to turn the evacuated area into an economic prosperity zone. It will need to prevent Palestinians from smuggling in weapons and increasing their military might and must assure Israel's right to

self-defense. Such a plan would have to be part of an overall strategic outlook that pushes both peoples toward peace through measured, circumspect, and coordinated steps. A second disengagement would have to be an improved version of the first, a plan with a political dimension and an economic depth that would strengthen the moderates -- Palestinians as well as Israelis. If the Prime Minister dares to go forward with Disengagement II, things would be easier for Israel on all fronts. It would help Netanyahu in domestic politics, just as the first disengagement helped Sharon, and it would turn the Prime Minister into the new leader of the Israeli center.

### III. QThe Opportunity in the Freeze

Settler leader Israel Harel wrote in HaQaretz (12/3): QThe vitality [of the settler movement] -- the consolidation of a generation that will constitute another link in the chain -- is what those enforcing the freeze are now seeking to crush. There is no other explanation. Benjamin Netanyahu, though he does not share the desire to destroy the settlement enterprise, lacks the strength of character to abide by his promise to resume construction in another 10 months. The U.S. administration, the Europeans, and the settlements' domestic foes (whose activity against the settlements and the Netanyahu government is financed by European money) will not let him.... If those leading the struggle make do with unfreezing a few hundred building permits, or even more, they have been graced with neither strategic vision nor an understanding of history. The time has come for them to elevate themselves from mere settlement activists -- an important job in normal days -- to leaders of a movement. The freeze, which a priori appears detrimental, actually presents them with a positive challenge: to reinvigorate the drive and capacity for achievement of the movement that succeeded in reviving Israel's pioneering spirit.

### IV. QWaiting for an American Plan

Giora Eiland, former Director of Israel's National Security Council, wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (12/3): QThe Palestinians do not believe that it is possible to reach a final status arrangement through direct negotiations with Israel, no matter who the prime minister is. In their eyes, the gaps between the sides cannot be bridged. Therefore, they prefer for Obama to reach the same conclusion, which was reached by Clinton at the end of 2000, that only a plan presented by the U.S. President himself, a concrete and detailed plan, would make Israel take things seriouslyQ.... Such an American proposal will also play into the hands of the Palestinians in another way. It will relieve them of the need to compromise in negotiations with Israel and to risk condemnation by Hamas and other Arab parties. They will prefer to take Obama's plan and bring it before the Arab League for approval. After they receive overwhelming support, they will be able to enjoy greater political confidence. What should Israel do? The decision on a construction freeze gives Netanyahu a certain breathing space against immediate American pressure. This should be used to convey two messages to the U.S. administration: firstly, after we have agreed on a formula to solve the small problem (freezing the settlements), we can now deal with solving the large problem (direct negotiations on the final status arrangement). Secondly, a forced American plan is dangerous, not only to the government in Israel but also to the American reputation.... An initiative of a president at the start of his path, which has high chances of failure, will have negative ramifications for his ability to lead initiatives until the end of his term.

### V. QListen to the Pain

Former Editor-in-Chief Moshe Ishon wrote in the editorial of the nationalist, Orthodox Makor Rishon-Hatzofe (12/3): QIt seems that Obama is trying to force Israel back into its pre-Six Day War borders, which will choke the Jewish state. President Obama has not concealed this policy in his speech to both Houses of Congress following his election. Over the past few months he has reiterated his policy that Jerusalem will be the capital of two states Q for Israel and the Palestinians. The President's declarations are inconsistent with Israel's policy.... Netanyahu must now adopt a

tough line against the construction freeze in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] and make clear that Israel intends neither to make concessions over that land nor to submit to U.S. dictates. Such compromise proposals might bring about further concessions. Israel would not bear them.

#### VI. QShalit : The Details Matter

The conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (12/3): QIsraelis would dearly love to see abducted soldier Gilad Shalit safely home and the entire episode of his cruel captivity finally concluded. That is indisputably the national consensus. But no similarly overwhelming consensus exists regarding the price which a sovereign, responsible government should pay for Shalit's release, given the risks of further kidnappings and killings orchestrated by those Palestinian terrorists who could go free in a prisoner exchange. Precisely because of widespread concerns over the terms and costs of a deal, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu repeatedly promised full disclosure and a comprehensive public debate on the specifics of any swap. Yet precisely the opposite is happening, with the formal sanction, as of this week, of a Supreme Court ruling.... The suspicion, in the Shalit affair, is that censorship is not safeguarding a vital national security interest as much as shielding edgy politicians from adverse public opinion. All Israelis will potentially be affected by the repercussions of a deal to free Shalit -- and, for that matter, by a decision not to proceed with such a deal. Whether we agree or not to the price that is being demanded, we have the right to know, in good time, exactly what that price is.

MORENO